

48. *Seebohm on the Nesting of the Spoonbill.*

[A Visit to the Colony of Spoonbills near Amsterdam. By Henry Seebohm, F.Z.S. Zoologist, 1880, p. 457.]

Mr. Seebohm and Capt. Elwes, on the 23rd May last year, made an excursion to the breeding-place of the Spoonbills on the Horster Meer, between Amsterdam and Utrecht, which was visited by Selater and Mr. A. W. Forbes in 1877, as already recorded in this Journal (*Ibis*, 1877, p. 412), and obtained a fine series of eggs.

49. *Sharpe on new Birds from New Guinea.*

[Description of two new Species of Birds from South-eastern New Guinea. By R. Bowdler Sharpe, F.L.S., F.Z.S., &c., Senior Assistant, Department of Zoology, British Museum. Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. ser. 5, vol. iii. p. 313.]

The species are *Pæcilodryas flavicincta* and *Aprosmictus broadbenti*, both in a collection transmitted by Mr. Broadbent.

50. *Sharpe on two new Kingfishers.*

[Description of two remarkable new Species of Kingfishers. By R. Bowdler Sharpe, F.L.S., F.Z.S., &c., Department of Zoology, British Museum. Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. ser. 5, vol. vi. p. 231.]

From a collection made by Mr. Charles Huntein on the East Cape, Milne Bay, and its vicinity, Mr. Sharpe describes two fine novelties, *Tanysiptera danae*, allied to *T. nympha*, and *Clytoceyx rex*, something like *Dacelo gaudichaudi*, but with a much thickened bill.

XXV.—*Letters, Announcements, &c.*

We have received the following letters addressed to the Editors of 'The Ibis':—

Turin, Dec. 28th, 1880.

SIRS,—Mr. Hume, in the last Nos. 1–3 of 'Stray Feathers,' p. 117, mentions my *Stachyris bocagei* (Ann. Mus. Civ. Gen. xiv. p. 223), and says that he should like very much to know how it can be distinguished from *Stachyris assimilis*, Wald.

(J. A. S. B. 1875, extra no., p. 116). I must confess that when I described *S. bocagei* I was unacquainted with *S. assimilis*; and even now I have not seen a specimen of this bird. If Mr. Hume will kindly send me one, I shall be glad to compare it with the type of *S. bocagei*, and certainly will not fail to let him know if they are of the same species or not.

I take this opportunity of correcting a mistake of mine in the original description of *Aprosmictus callopterus* (Ann. Mus. Civ. Gen. xiv. p. 29), which has also crept into the description of the same bird in my 'Ornitologia della Papuasie e delle Molucche,' pt. i. p. 135. The mistake is contained in the first two lines of the description, "Capite, collo et gastræo toto rubro-puniceis; interscapulio, uropygio, supracaudalibus et subcaudalibus pulchre cyaneis." Now *the under tail-coverts* in *A. callopterus* are not *blue* (*cyaneus*), but *red, like the rest of the underparts*. After the correction the description will run as follows:—"Capite, collo et gastræo toto rubro-puniceis; interscapulio, uropygio et supracaudalibus pulchre cyaneis." It is important to point out the mistake, as in the allied species, *Aprosmictus chloropterus*, Ramsay, the under tail-coverts are really *dark bluish, edged with red*.

As I have entered upon the subject of Papuan birds, I may as well dwell upon it a little longer, and say a few words on some species lately described by M. Oustalet in a paper noticed in the last number of 'The Ibis.' Four species are there described—a second species of *Drepanornis*, a *Cyclopsittacus* which M. Oustalet has kindly named after me, *Chloromyias laglaizei*, and *Pomareopsis semiatra*.

As to *Chloromyias laglaizei*, I have already pointed out (Ann. Mus. Civ. Gen. xvi. p. 70) that it is the female of *Parus arfaki*, Meyer, the same sex having been described also by me in 1875 as *Oreocharis stictoptera*.

The *Pomareopsis semiatra* is my *Grallina bruijnii*. Of this I am satisfied, a sketch of the bird having been kindly sent me by M. Oustalet.

Cyclopsittacus salvadorii seems a beautiful and perfectly distinct species; but I am not quite sure that equally distinct from its ally. *Drepanornis albertisi*, is the newly described

D. bruijnii, especially if *D. albertisi* should turn up also from the south-east of New Guinea. I think that the British Museum has quite recently received a specimen of it from Port Moresby.

Yours &c.,

T. SALVADORI.

Obituary.—JOHN GOULD, who has for many years occupied a leading position amongst our ornithologists, died in February last, at his residence in Charlotte Street, Bedford Square, in his seventy-seventh year. Gould was born at Lyme, in Dorsetshire, in 1804, and in early life came to Windsor, where he passed several years under the care of the late Mr. J. T. Aiton, of the Royal Gardens. He afterwards went to London, and became Taxidermist to the Zoological Society's Museum. Whilst occupying this post in 1830 Gould acquired a collection of birdskins from the Himalaya Mountains, a country then ornithologically almost unknown. In this collection were examples of many species then new to science; and in his use of the opportunity thus afforded him Gould laid the foundation of his fame and fortune. He first obtained the aid of the late Mr. N. A. Vigors in framing the scientific descriptions, which were published in the first volume of the 'Proceedings' of the Zoological Society; he then enlisted the artistic talent of his wife to draw the most remarkable of the species on stone, and upon these foundations commenced his 'Century of Birds from the Himalaya Mountains.' In size this work rivalled the volumes of Levaillant, but far excelled them in the artistic excellence of the plates.

The number of subscribers obtained for his first essay encouraged Gould to proceed; and he soon afterwards commenced his 'Birds of Europe,' which was completed in five volumes. Meeting still with the same success, he continued uninterruptedly up to his death to publish Monographs and Faunas in a continuous stream, all uniform with his first work, and all built on the same plan. The result, as shown below, is a series of forty-one folio volumes, illustrated by 2999

plates, a performance quite unrivalled in any other branch of literature.

To our mind his 'Birds of Australia' is by far the most important from an ornithological point of view of all Gould's works. To obtain materials for this he made an expedition to Australia himself in 1838, and for several years employed skilled collectors in different parts of the country. He was thus the means of adding enormously to what was previously known of the avifauna of that continent. During the publication of 'The Birds of Australia' Mrs. Gould died; and Gould had henceforth to employ artists to do the work so efficiently performed by her who, in fact, first made his career possible, and was the mainstay of his undertaking.

As a collector of specimens Gould was unceasingly watchful. For many years hardly a Humming-bird came to London but he contrived to obtain it, or at least to see it; and it was thus that he amassed a vast collection of these beautiful birds, the subjects of his monograph of the Trochilidæ. A set of these he mounted in glass shades, and exhibited in the gardens of the Zoological Society during the Great Exhibition of 1851. To this mounted series he made additions from time to time; and it still remains a most attractive exhibition.

To review the whole of Gould's works is not our intention here; nor is it necessary, as they are doubtless known to most of our readers. The plates of these works are of great merit; but, to our eye, there is always present in them too much of studied effect, which detracts from their scientific accuracy. To a patient ornithologist, seeking only the correct determination of a species, a reference to one of Gould's plates is not always so satisfactory as could be desired.

With systematic ornithology Gould did not trouble himself much: he always used to say he was follower of his first master, Vigors, and was content with his scheme of arrangement. But in discriminating minute specific differences between allied forms Gould had few equals; and though his judgment on such points sometimes carried him too far, it was seldom at fault.

During the last few years of his life Gould suffered much

in health, yet, though almost confined to his sofa, he never ceased to work.

Of the collections left by Gould the Humming-birds form the largest and most important part; but in addition to these, the subjects of most of his other monographs are well represented. The whole of these have been offered by his representatives to the Trustees of the British Museum for a moderate sum, and, we are glad to add, have been purchased for the national collection. The collection formed in Australia, it will be remembered, was lost to this country, and is now in America, in the Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

List of Gould's principal illustrated Works :—

A Century of Birds from the Himalaya Mountains, 1 vol., 80 plates.

Icones Avium, 1 vol., 18 plates.

Birds of Europe, 5 vols., 449 plates.

Birds of Australia, with Supplement, 8 vols., 681 plates.

Monograph of the Trogons, 1st edition, 1 vol., 36 plates.

Monograph of the Toucans, 1st edition, 1 vol., 34 plates.

Monograph of the Partridges of America, 1 vol., 32 plates.

Monograph of the Trogons, 2nd edition, 1 vol., 46 plates.

Monograph of the Toucans, 2nd edition, 1 vol., 52 plates.

Monograph of the Trochilidæ, and one Supplementary number, 5 vols. and 1 part, 384 plates.

Birds of Great Britain, 5 vols., 367 plates.

Birds of Asia, 32 parts, equal to 6 vols., 497 plates.

Birds of New Guinea, 11 parts, equal to 2 vols., 141 plates.

Mammals of Australia, 3 vols., 182 plates.

MR. E. R. ALSTON.—The untimely death of our friend and fellow-worker Edward Richard Alston, which took place at his rooms in Maddox Street on the 7th of March last, leaves a vacancy in the thin ranks of the working naturalists of this country that will not be easily filled up. At the time of his decease Mr. Alston was Secretary to the Linnean Society, a member of the Council of the Zoological Society, and Treasurer to the Zoological Club, and up to within a few days of his death was engaged in active zoological work. Mr. Alston, who died of phthisis at the early age of thirty-

five, although somewhat retiring in disposition, was of a particularly kind and amiable nature, always most friendly with those with whom he was brought into contact, and ready to help them by advice or assistance. Mr. Alston was of Scotch parentage, and a native of Lanarkshire. Being from infancy of delicate constitution, he was educated chiefly under private tuition, and did not go to school. Notwithstanding these disadvantages, he was a good scholar and a neat and concise writer, and had an excellent acquaintance with comparative anatomy. Taking early to the pursuit of natural history he became a contributor to the 'Zoologist' and to other popular journals, principally upon mammals and birds. Mr. Alston's first important paper was an account (published in this Journal) of his journey to Archangel, made in 1872, in company with his friend Mr. J. Harvie Brown, in which excellent observations are given on the summer migrants and other feathered inhabitants of that previously little explored district. Shortly afterwards Mr. Alston moved his headquarters to London during the first part of the year, and undertook the compilation of the portion of the 'Zoological Record' relating to mammals, which he carried on in a very painstaking and methodical way for six years (1873-1878). A new edition of Bell's 'British Mammals,' which had long been called for, appeared in 1874. Mr. Alston, although he is only credited with having "assisted" in this work, was, we believe, its virtual compiler. From that date also he became a frequent reader of papers at the meetings of the Zoological Society and author of several excellent memoirs in the 'Proceedings.' Amongst these we may call special attention to his revision of the genera of Rodentia, published in 1876, as a most successful exposition of the many difficult points connected with the arrangement of this group of mammals, and to his memoirs on the Mammals of Asia Minor collected by Mr. C. G. Danford (1877 and 1880). In 1880 Mr. Alston also prepared the mammal portion of the 'Fauna of Scotland'*, issued by the Natural-History

* The Fauna of Scotland, with special reference to Clydesdale and the Western District—Mammalia. By Edward R. Alston. 8vo: Glasgow, 1880.

Society of Glasgow. Mr. Alston's last and most important work, which he had fortunately just brought to an end before his untimely death, was the "Mammals" of Salvin and Godman's '*Biologia Centrali-Americana*.' The first part of this was published in 1879, the eighth part, containing the completion of the Mammals, in December last. The death of this promising naturalist when in the full tide of work must be a subject of universal regret among all lovers of science. Mr. Alston was elected a member of the British Ornithologists' Union in 1874.

ETIENNE MULSANT died on the 4th November 1880, at Lyons, at the advanced age of eighty-four. M. Mulsant's name will be chiefly known by his numerous works and papers on Entomology; for in this branch of science he was a most industrious worker. In ornithology his attention was almost exclusively given to the study of the Trochilidæ. His first work in connexion with these birds was published some forty years ago, when he was associated with the well-known French traveller Delattre in the description of some of the novelties brought home by the latter from Central America and Colombia. He afterwards elaborated a classification of the Trochilidæ, based upon the collection of the late Edouard Verreaux. This was preparatory to the commencement of a more serious undertaking—his '*Histoire naturelle des Oiseaux-mouches ou Colibris*,' which he lived to complete in four volumes, illustrated by a good many plates.

Mulsant was a methodical and painstaking author; and his final work on the Trochilidæ is on the whole a valuable contribution to our knowledge of this complicated group of birds. One of its chief features is the way in which the genera are divided and subdivided—in our opinion, far beyond what is either natural or convenient.

We also regret to have to report the death of Mr. C. E. LAWSON, which occurred very suddenly on the 29th December last. Mr. Lawson was elected a member of the British Ornithologists' Union in May 1880.